

Testimony to the Appropriations Committee at the Public Hearing on February 11, 2010

My name is Eileen Lader and I am the supervisor of Maternal and Child Health at Family Advocacy at Middlesex Hospital. I would like to take this opportunity to call your attention to the devastating effect that the Governor's Budget Adjustments would have upon the Children's Trust Fund and specifically the Nurturing Families Network Program. The plan calls for the elimination of the Hartford and New Haven expansion sites as well as what would amount to a 30% reduction in funding to the sites associated with the 29 birthing hospitals.

The Nurturing Families Network provides weekly home visitation to first time parents at risk for child abuse and neglect, as well as the opportunity for hospital visits to every first time family in the state of CT in order to offer education, resources and the opportunity for supportive telephone contact by trained volunteers. These services focus upon increasing the parent-infant bond, learning child development information and screening infants and young children for the possibility of developmental delays. In addition, there are ongoing Nurturing Group Programs in the community specifically targeted at parenting young children. Some of these groups are specifically for fathers, teen parents or pregnant women. All of these programs work with families who are touched by poverty, mental illness, and addiction.

In the state of CT., Nurturing Families Network reaches more than 4,000 first time families annually. The rate of substantiated child abuse and neglect in high risk families receiving home visitation is significantly lower than state or national rates. For NFN families, the rate is on average 3% compared to 20% for families not participating in this type of program. This program is cost effective. It costs just over \$3,000 per year for intensive home visiting as compared with \$30,000 annually for each substantiated DCF case.

In addition to the many benefits of Nurturing Families Network to Connecticut's families, it is important to be cognizant of the effect that the Governor's Proposed Budget would have upon the providers of these services. During a time when Connecticut's unemployment rate is staggering, the funding cuts to the Nurturing Families Network and other programs of the Children's Trust Fund would precipitate a loss of employment for hundreds of individuals when the Governor states that she is seeking to create jobs!

We cannot rely on further spending cuts to programs that provide services to our most vulnerable citizens in order to balance the budget. We need an approach that addresses the state's revenue problems with revenue solutions including a more progressive income tax, raising taxes on items with negative health consequences including alcohol and soft drinks and positioning the state to tax internet sales.

I am asking for your support of The Children's Trust Fund and in turn, the thousands of families we serve.

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